



# TOWN OF BOYLSTON

221 MAIN STREET  
BOYLSTON, MA 01505

THE OFFICE OF THE  
TOWN ADMINISTRATOR  
Nancy Colbert Puff

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## **Route 140 Corridor Study Scope or Work Summary**

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For the past several years, Boylston has been taking affirmative steps to support growth in its commercial tax base and attract new businesses to town. These have included:

- joining the region's Economic Target Area;
- offering tax increment financing to businesses seeking to invest here;
- making sensible zoning changes to assist in business expansion;
- creating an Applicant Advisory Committee to help demystify the regulatory process for development petitions in their initial stages; and
- adopting "expedited permitting" regulations (a.k.a. Chapter 43D) for development sites.

As a result, Boylston was ranked the 7<sup>th</sup> most "tech friendly" community in the State by the MA High Tech Council in 2008.

In addition, the State awarded Boylston with a grant to conduct a comprehensive land use, regulatory, transportation, and fiscal impact analysis of the Route 140 corridor to promote economic development. This study will guide the Town's effort to optimize future development along 140, and will recommend specific actions that can be taken to enhance the Town's competitive position in the regional economy. These will include proposed zoning changes, marketing, financing mechanisms, partnerships, etc.

*Q: How is this different from past studies?*

A: Neither of the Town's past land use plans (a Comprehensive Plan in 2000, and a Community Development Plan in 2004) focused in great detail on the economic development potential of Route 140. This study will look at Boylston's market area and determine a strategic direction for promoting Route 140 to business interests. It will estimate future potential tax base expansion, and identify any necessary improvements (including cost estimates) to be made to Route 140 as development occurs over time.

*Q: How will Boylston benefit from this?*

A: This study will provide a "road map" of the steps Boylston needs to take in order to better attract business to this area of Town. These practical recommendations will aid Town leaders, including the business marketing committee and Planning Board, in negotiating the details of development proposals, and will put the Town in a good position to seek the State's continued support for business growth.

*Q: Do we need outside consultants to do this? Aren't people in Town more knowledgeable?*

A: Boylston residents and business owners are definitely in the best position to "sell" the Town to others, and the consulting team will rely heavily on public input to shape the plan. However, technical expertise in legal, engineering, and land use planning to assess existing conditions and identify the specific actions Boylston needs to take. Then, it will be up to the Town to do the hard, on-going work of implementing these recommendations.



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## **Proposed Route 140 Zoning Changes – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**1. *Why is the Town proposing these changes?***

Updating the Zoning By-Law is just one part of the Town's overall effort to attract business development to the Rt. 140 corridor. The zoning changes will not guarantee new development, but simplifying and modernizing the Zoning By-law will make the regulatory process more transparent to potential developers and better enable the Town to dictate use and site design.

**2. *Are these changes consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Plan accepted at the 2000 Town Meeting?***

In addition to changes already enacted, a major recommendation of the Comprehensive Plan was to "prepare a 'Conceptual Design Guidelines Plan' for commercial development . . . and enhance zoning provisions to foster planned commercial development." Although it has taken 10 years for the process to be completed, the present zoning changes are completely consistent with the goals outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

**3. *I understand the zoning changes were recommended by outside consultants — how do they know what's best for Boylston?***

At the very beginning of the process, the consultants conducted extensive interviews with members of various Town Boards and Departments as well as owners of businesses located along Rt. 140 and other interested parties. As planning proceeded, two public meetings were held where findings and recommendations were reported and public comments received. The Planning Board was regularly updated as the Zoning By-Law amendments were drafted, and Planning Board recommendations were incorporated.

**4. *Will these changes affect my home?***

No changes are being proposed to any of the Town's residential zoning districts, and with minor exception, no residential property is being rezoned to commercial use. Residential properties abutting the new zoning districts should see little change since the intensity of business uses allowed in the new districts is largely the same as it is now.

**5. *Much of this area is in a watershed protection area – will these changes impact our water quality?***

Much of the Rt. 140 corridor lies within the Wellhead Protection Overlay Zone, which strictly regulates any use that may pose a hazard to the Town wells. No changes are being proposed to the Wellhead Protection Zone, and any use allowed in the new business/commercial districts will be subject to the provisions of the Wellhead Protection Overlay Zone.

**6. *In 2003, the Residential Office Overlay and Flexible Business Development Overlay Zones were adopted to encourage development along Rt. 140 — are these now being replaced?***

No! The Residential Office Overlay Zone, which allows low intensity office use in residentially-zoned properties along Rt. 140, remains unchanged. The Flexible Business Development Zone, whose purpose is to provide for a diversity of compatible business uses while setting planning and design standards, is being retained as one of the three new zoning districts.

**7. *I've heard the Town thinks these zoning changes are related to the Tahanto project – how is zoning linked to the Schools?***

Commercial development tends to contribute more towards the tax base than it costs to provide services for the development – in other words, their tax dollars can be considered an overall “gain” to the tax base. We hope the additional commercial development that comes to Boylston over the long term, will help to offset the increased amount the Town will need to pay for the new school.

**8. *How will these changes affect the traffic on Route 140?***

To the extent that these zoning changes encourage new development along the corridor that would not have occurred under present zoning, traffic congestion will increase. However, a traffic engineering study was undertaken to analyze potential impacts and to provide recommendations for mitigation. The Site Plan Approval and Special Permit processes provide a means for the Town to require developers to contribute their fair share of the cost to make needed improvements.

**9. *Why is agriculture mentioned in these changes that are focused on Route 140?***

Agricultural uses are protected under state zoning law, and their inclusion in the proposed bylaw preserves that protection. Some changes are proposed to required lot size and frontage to make certain uses more practical.

**10. *Why did the Planning Board vote to amend the proposed map after its public hearing?***

As originally proposed, the Multi-Use Industrial Zone located along the easterly side of Rt. 140 included four residential parcels near the intersection of East Temple Street. Only one of these parcels has practical access from Rt. 140, and three have School Street addresses. Since these lots already have houses built on them, the Board felt that changing the zoning to commercial/industrial use could be potentially disruptive to the established residential neighborhood. The Board is open to the possibility that these parcels could be added to the Multi-Use Industrial Zone in the future, especially at the request of the property owners.